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XI

WARFARE

THE Orokaiva have had something of a reputation as a fighting people, though others no doubt could dispute their claim to the doubtful distinction of being the most savage in the Territory. The fame of the Orokaiva in this respect is probably due to the resistance, more than usually determined, which they made against the miners some thirty years ago; and it is certain that they have held a more independent and fearless attitude toward the whites than is seen among many other Papuans. Among themselves they were bellicose in the extreme. Every village was on the *qui vive* against attack, and, except during the periods of rather ticklish peace and uncertain friendship, was probably joining in some plan of concerted aggression.

Although the title of this chapter is Warfare, the following pages will deal with indiscriminate fighting and killing as well as with the regular raid. There was no idea of sporting equality of chance when the Orokaiva was bent on killing. I have already given one or two random instances in which the solitary stranger was put to death as a matter of course. It may be fairly doubted whether a party of primitive Orokaiva meeting a lone stranger would hesitate to kill him any more than they would hesitate to kill a bush-pig. Nor does the warrior think it beneath his dignity to kill a woman. One is surprised at the pride which a man evidently takes in the slaughter of defenceless victims. A certain Pahua of Soroputa (one of the early village constables who still wears his uniform) accounted for three victims before he became a guardian of the law. The first was made on a raid on the Hunjovarihu people. The attackers having surrounded the village by night rushed it at morning; Pahua found a man sitting down engaged in eating his breakfast, and speared him before he had time to rise. His second victim was one of a fishing party caught

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181 517 at a disadvantage; Pahua speared his man in the side and he fell into the water. His third victim was a woman. Long previously Pahua had lost a brother killed by the Hunjovarehu people and was naturally nursing his revenge. It now happened that a Hunjovarehu woman, sister-in-law to one of Pahua's countrymen, was visiting his village of Soroputa. Pahua was informed that she was asleep in a house, so he stole in, speared the sleeping woman in the breast and struck her on the head with a club. He was not ashamed but proud of this exploit, which satisfied his long-delayed vengeance.

Inter-Clan Fighting

519 The raid, or concerted fight, may involve different tribes or merely different clans of the same tribe. I have already explained the general difference between the former engagement (*isoro*) and the latter (*embogi*), which is a comparatively trivial affair. It appears that the *esu*, an example of which has been described in connexion with the marriage payment, may upon small provocation develop into an *embogi*. Many such affrays took place during my stay among the Aiga, though I was only fortunate enough to witness one of them. This occurred at the taking over of a marriage payment. The charging and counter-charging had given place to the individual harangues in which old grievances were discussed with some bitterness. The excitement seemed to have died away, and the pig had already been killed when an inopportune taunt set the whole village in an uproar. Both parties rushed to arms and were immediately involved in a confused conflict with three or four lively vortices. In a scuffle of this kind there is a great deal of sham. The participants rejoice in the loud impact of their spears and clubs upon one another's shields, but they are not out to kill. Minor wounds are common, though they are concealed if possible from the Government. In the above-mentioned case I must report, almost with regret, that we succeeded in quelling the uproar before it had reached a more interesting stage. The most difficult to pacify were the women, who,

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186 S14 of offence and they will vanish in a moment, giving place to open hostility and the conduct which that condition demands.

181 Before leaving this subject of extra-group morality it is worth while quoting some opinions of those who in the early dangerous days had to face the Orokaiva as enemies. Sir Wm. MacGregor, after many and various meetings with hostile tribes from end to end of Papua, wrote (of the Mambare people): 'It is very clear that these natives are more warlike, pugnacious, and cunning than any we have had to deal with hitherto.'[1] W. E. Armit, the resident magistrate, who in the days of the gold-rush had as wide a fighting experience of them as any other, wrote (of the Papangi): 'They are certainly not destitute of courage, but, on the other hand, they are treacherous, truculent, aggressive, cruel, and cunning. . . . They fight treacherously and lie abominably'; and of the people about Wasida he records a very nasty first impression: 'The men have villainous faces, coupled to a peculiar cunning leer which imparts a diabolical look to their countenances.'[2] These natives of Wasida are later spoken of as the 'most rampant and obstinate of savages' who 'persistently attacked every Government party which went near them'.[3] It is pleasing to add that under different circumstances, viz. those of service with the Armed Constabulary, the character of the Orokaiva appears more favourably. Speaking as Commandant, Capt. Barton said that the Mambare police were 'brave to a fault';[4] later as Administrator he said, of the police recruited from the Northern and North-Eastern Divisions at large, that they have 'stronger characters than is the case in the majority of Papuans, and are also physically sturdy and alert';[5] and H. J. Ryan, a true soldier himself, found that the Northern men in his detachment at Kikori performed their allotted tasks cheerfully and willingly, and when on patrol were most zealous to distinguish themselves, especially when facing hostile natives.[6]

[1] *Annual Report*, 1896–7, p. 28.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1904–5, p. 14.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1905–6, p. 13.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1899–1900, p. 98.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1900–1, p. 87.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1912–13, p. 78.